(iii) An issue of CD alert (monthly Newsletter of NICD) on bio-terrorism with special reference to anthrax was circulated in October, 2001 to all the concerned health authorities in different States and Union Territories. The issue also covered the guidelines to be followed during biological war/terrorism and effective handling of suspicious envelops/package.

(iv) Guidelines for packaging, transportation of clinical specimens and processing protocol in laboratories were circulated to all the Medical Colleges in the country.

(v) A meeting on chemical and bio-terrorism was organized on 29th October, by the Department of Health which was participated by the Secretaries of Home & Health, Director of Health Services from various States/Union Territories. The representatives from the States informed the preparatory measures taken by them and assured availability of drugs in adequate quantity to tackle any situation. Drugs like Penicillin, Ciprofloxacin, Doxycycline, Amoxycillin are recommended for medical therapy for patients suffering from Anthrax infection. A large number of manufacturers in India are marketing these drugs and are available in all corners of the country.

(vi) National Institute for Communicable Diseases, Delhi has been identified as the nodal agency for investigations of any specimen suspected for anthrax.

(vii) A round the clock control room is functioning at NICD from 19th October, 2001 where suspected envelops/packages are being received for tests.

Action against charitable hospitals

798. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have warned of strict action against all charitable hospitals not adhering to their promise of providing a certain percentage of free services in lieu of the land provided to them at token or institutional price;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps Government have, so far, taken or propose to take against such erring hospitals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Average of Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Optionans in the country

799. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for one billion population of the country, there are only 10,000 Opthalmologists, 5,000 Optometrists and 20,000 Optionans, which is less than the world average;

(b) if so, the national and world average; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken to fill the gap?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) It is estimated that there are over 11000 eye surgeons and over 6000 Opththalmic Assistants in India. No. of optometrists and opticians is not known.

(b) The eye surgeon population ratio in India is 1 eye surgeon per lakh population which is better as compared to other developing countries. In developed countries, 1 eye surgeon is available for less than 1 lakh population.

(c) Under the Vision 2020: The Right to Sight initiative, the plan of action for India is being formulated which includes appropriate Human Resource Development for Eye Care at various levels.

Report of Vision of Improvement Expert Working Council

800. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the report of Vision of Improvement Expert Working Council stating that 40 per cent of the youth in Delhi cannot see clearly;

(b) if so, whether Government would get a similar survey conducted in all parts of the country; and

(c) what strategies are being evolved to tackle the vision problem particularly of the youth?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) No, Sir.